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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PO](#) [US](#) [VE](#)  
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR - FOREIGN MINISTER TOUR D'HORIZON

REF: A. STATE 147780  
[1](#)B. 2005 LISBON 1609  
[1](#)C. LISBON 1845  
[1](#)D. LISBON 1593

Classified By: Classified by Pol/Econ Officer Cari Enav for reasons 1.4  
(a) (b) and (d)

#### Summary

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Ambassador Hoffman's meeting with Foreign Minister Amado on September 8 covered the waterfront of issues. The Minister said that he would push hard with the Prime Minister to allow Lajes to be used as a transit point in repatriating Guantanamo detainees (ref a). During recent closed testimony before the Portuguese Parliament, he did not diverge from his predecessor's position that the Portuguese government was not aware of any CIA flights on/through Portugal (ref b). He highlighted the EU's increased involvement in the Middle East, calling for greater engagement with Syria to isolate Iran. Amado said he would encourage other members of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Nations (CPLP) to vote for Guatemala for the UNSC. Amado reiterated his request to meet with Secretary Rice as soon as possible to discuss the Guantanamo

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detainee repatriation request in addition to Portugal's upcoming EU Presidency agenda.

#### Transit at Lajes for Detainee Flights

[1](#)2. (S/NF) Ambassador Hoffman gave the Foreign Minister a copy of President Bush's Sept. 6 speech on the Global War on Terrorism, noting the President's desire to be transparent and to address the suspended state of many Guantanamo detainees. He asked the Minister if the USG could use Lajes as a transit point for flights returning detainees to their home countries, per ref a. Minister Amado said that he needed to check with the Prime Minister who would be difficult to convince, but that he would push hard for Portuguese cooperation so long as there was total transparency. Details would need to be worked out; there would need to be a clear political approach. He underscored that there could be tremendous negative fallout if this was not done right. The timing was not ideal on the heels of his Sept. 5 testimony on CIA flights. He promised to provide an interim answer next week. He said that he needed to meet with Secretary Rice to discuss this and a host of related issues.

[1](#)3. (S/NF) Amado said that the return of Guantanamo detainees would be an excellent opportunity for the USG to "turn the page" and to begin working on a new human rights image. Europe understood the USG reaction to the horrific events of

9/11, but it was time to return to normalcy since effective security measures had been put in place. He noted that Europe and the US shared a value system and that this initiative provided an excellent base upon which to rebuild the framework of cooperation.

#### Testimony on CIA Flights

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¶4. (C) Minister Amado said that his Sept. 5 closed-door testimony on CIA flights before Portugal's Parliament did not diverge from his predecessor's position that the Portuguese government was not aware of any CIA flights on/ through Portuguese soil. Amado commented, "I said what (Freitas do Amaral) said." He also reiterated the government's willingness to revamp the legal framework for the clearance process. He added that Freitas do Amaral had sent a letter to the European Parliament's Temporary Committee investigating CIA flights in response to its inquiries. Amado commented that the media had misquoted him when it said that he had acknowledged CIA flights. All he said was that he had the same list of flights as Eurocontrol had.

¶5. (C) In addition to European Parliament agitation on this issue, Amado expressed a need to control his own Socialist Party. He said there was not a broad consensus within the party to pursue a strong transatlantic foreign policy and that there was concern that the "left wing" within the party could break away in response to the government's handling of human rights and security issues.

¶6. (C) Ambassador Hoffman assured Amado that the US was very careful to abide by all its agreements with Portugal - in word and in spirit - and that the Ambassador had shared all the information he had on the subject with Amado.

#### Underscoring USG position on Middle East

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¶7. (C) Ambassador Hoffman thanked Amado for his pro-active role within the EU during the recent conflict in Lebanon and for Portugal's contribution to UNIFIL. He urged Portugal to encourage continued EU coordination on Middle East policy, underscored the four principles guiding US policy on Syria, and reiterated the importance of diplomatically isolating Iran. He asked that Portugal encourage other EU members to do the same and that Portugal inform Post in advance of any official meetings with controversial figures.

#### EU's New Role

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¶8. (C) Amado commented that at the beginning of August, the EU had "nothing to say" on developments in the Middle East, and that many member-states were afraid that the conflict in Lebanon would spiral out of control. A month later, the Council of Ministers had met three times and agreed to pursue a greater political and military role - beyond the traditional role of providing development and humanitarian assistance. Amado underscored that there was a strong desire within the EU to coordinate initiatives with the US so as not to open a new rift in the transatlantic relationship. He said the EU needed "to coordinate internally, with the US and with Russia" on finding solutions to the Middle East's many problems.

#### Amado says - Engage Syria, Isolate Iran

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¶9. (C) Amado said that Iran posed the greatest threat since WWII - alluding to the country's growing influence in the Middle East, the spread of Islamic fundamentalism, and its nuclear program - and underscored the need for all sides to work together on solving the problem. (Note: He did not offer any concrete examples.) He agreed with the USG's four basic principles on Syria. However, he added, the EU thought it was important to engage Syria, and that by doing so, the West would be in a better position to isolate Iran. On the other hand, if the West isolated Syria, it would push the country further into Iran's sphere of influence. He noted that officials from Finland, Greece, Germany and Spain had recently met with Syrian officials, and he encouraged the US

to have greater political contact with Syria. He said that he had agreed to meet with Syrian Foreign Minister Bilal after learning that several Socialist Party members had already agreed to do so (ref c) .

¶10. (C) Amado said that the EU wanted to isolate Iran by enhancing the role of the Arab League in drawing a distinction between Arab and Islamic identity. Limiting the spread of Islamic fundamentalism he declared, could limit Iran's influence in the Muslim world. He did not buy into any of the claims by Syrian Information Minister Bilal that the US was to blame for all the Middle East's woes, underscoring to Bilal the strong US-Portuguese alliance and the strong role the US played in the global arena. He urged Syria to focus on the issues, not play the blame game.

Urging the CPLP to support Guatemala

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¶11. (C) The Ambassador encouraged Portugal to reach out to the Lusophone community to urge support for Guatemala's election to the UNSC. Amado said he planned to do so when he meets with members of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Nations (CPLP) in New York later this month. Amado would not confirm an official visit by Hugo Chavez to Portugal later this year (ref d). While admitting that they could not hold him off forever, Amado commented that no arrangements had been made to receive Chavez. He added that he had recently met with Brazilian President Lula, who he thought could offer useful insight into dealing with Venezuela. Portugal planned to have greater dialogue with Lula should he win reelection. He emphasized the need for strong US engagement with Brazil to manage the Venezuela situation.

Comment

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¶12. (S/NF) As usual, this was a very friendly and broad-ranging discussion. Amado is very pro-American and extremely accessible. He was strongly supportive of our request to use Lajes as a refueling/transit point for Gitmo detainees being returned to their home countries and was prepared to press the Prime Minister for an expeditious and positive response, so long as we continue to be fully transparent with the GOP about the flights.  
Hoffman